

## Self help resources

### Websites

[www.anxieties.com](http://www.anxieties.com)

Free self-help guides to download and print for panic attacks, fear of flying, obsessive compulsive disorder, generalised anxiety disorder, social anxiety, phobias and post traumatic stress disorder.

[www.livinglifetothefull.com](http://www.livinglifetothefull.com)

Part of the NHS Greater Glasgow and Depression Alliance, Scotland's' joint START Project. It provides training in life skills and how to address common issues to do with low mood, such as how to tackle poor sleep, learn relaxation, become more active and challenge negative thinking.

[www.calipso.co.uk](http://www.calipso.co.uk)

Provides CD ROM self-help programmes which can be bought online for depression and bulimia.

[www.topuk.org](http://www.topuk.org)

Triumph Over Phobia (TOP UK) is a UK registered charity which aims to help sufferers of phobias, obsessive compulsive disorder and other related anxiety to overcome their fears and become ex-sufferers.

# A guide to choosing psychological therapies in NHS Bedfordshire

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This booklet is for anyone who is depressed, anxious, unhappy, or has emotional problems they cannot sort out on their own.

It tells you about NHS psychological therapies that are available in Bedfordshire.

It explains what they are and what they aim to do and will help you ask the right questions and make the right choices for you.

The information in this booklet is based on the best research evidence, Department of Health guidelines and recommendations from the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE), for more information visit [www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

### What are psychological therapies and can they help me?

Psychological therapies usually involve talking and listening. Most of us want to talk to someone who listens and accepts us, especially when we're going through a bad time.

Sometimes it's easier to talk to a stranger than to relatives or friends. Some therapists will focus on things in your past that cause difficult feelings and help you understand and deal with them.

Some will help you identify unhelpful thoughts and patterns of behaviour that cause and maintain current difficulties.

All therapists aim to help you find better ways of coping. They are trained to listen attentively and help you find your own answers, without judging you.

People go for psychological therapies for a range of reasons:

- Maybe someone has died or left
- You may be depressed or feel isolated
- You may not be able to sleep
- You may have anxiety or panic attacks
- Or you may simply be trying to understand yourself better

### What is the best solution for you?

You may find a counsellor or therapist can help you through a crisis or difficult patch in your life. Or you may find it more helpful to talk after the crisis has passed, to think about what happened and why.

Some people find psychological therapies enable them to find new, more helpful ways of thinking and behaving, in order to overcome problems such as depression or anxiety.

Psychological therapies can help you stay well, or help you notice when you are under pressure. They are most likely to help if you want to explore and change your feelings, thoughts and behaviour.

They do not offer magic solutions. You may find them hard work and progress can be slow or painful. It may not be the right time for you to talk, or talking about things may make you feel worse at first.

What you feel able to cope with is important and this can change over time.

There are many kinds of psychological therapies and they can overlap (see [Different Approaches](#)). Therapists have different types of training, so their approaches and ways of working will vary.

How well you get on with your therapist can influence how much you get out of a particular type of therapy. You need to feel you can trust and respect your therapist for therapy to work for you.

In Bedfordshire there are therapists and counsellors from different ethnic backgrounds who reflect the cultural diversity of the area. Your GP can ask for your preferences to be taken into account when arranging your treatment.

Therapies are also available from voluntary organisations, some of which are run by and for people from minority ethnic communities, women's organisations and groups for people with specific issues.

## Who are these therapies for?

Psychological therapies are for all sorts of people. They can help whatever your background, age or ethnic group.

If you see your GP for an emotional or mental health problem, you may be given drugs such as anti-depressants to help with your symptoms. You may be offered a self-help programme, supported by a psychological wellbeing graduate worker, who can tell you about other types of psychological therapy.

Your GP can also refer you directly to a range of psychological therapy services available on the NHS in Bedfordshire. You can ask your GP to refer you, regardless of any diagnosis you have been given or any medication you are on. Tell your GP if you want therapy instead of drugs, or if you want to try a combination of drugs and psychological therapy.

Most therapists will be happy to work with you while you are on medication. There is no reason why the two should not be used together. Research shows drugs and therapy work better together than either on its own for people with moderate to severe depression.

In an ideal world, everyone who sees a GP because they are in emotional or psychological distress should be offered some form of therapy. But some people feel it is a sign of weakness to go for this type of help. Seeing a therapist doesn't mean you are self-indulgent or going mad. Don't let these sorts of prejudices stop you. You are actually being strong if you are prepared to look at yourself and your situation.

## How and where can I get therapy on the NHS in Bedfordshire

Psychological therapies are available free on the NHS at your GP surgery or clinic, at NHS Bedfordshire hospitals, or in the local community or health centres.

There will often be a waiting list, as NHS therapists can be in short supply. Seeing your GP is the first step. He/she can refer when appropriate to a primary care counsellor, cognitive behavioural psychotherapist, or clinical psychologist.

In Bedfordshire you will be offered the type of psychological therapy recommended for your problem by NICE, which issues guidelines about best practice.

If you are put on a waiting list, you can call to check if you are moving up it. If you have a long wait, you may want to think about other options.

Your GP could refer you to a local voluntary organisation for counselling, or you could approach them yourself.

## Psychological therapies outside the NHS

There are many voluntary organisations providing low-cost or free counselling services. They may ask for a donation, according to your means, but no-one is turned away if they cannot pay.

Some organisations, such as Triumph over Phobia, focus on a specific problem or some organisations see specific groups of people, such as the Asian Counselling Service. Others help with a wide range of difficulties, such as Mind (see [Professional Organisations](#) at the back of this booklet).

Many therapists work privately. They can be expensive, but may base their fees on your income. Ask about this and talk to several therapists before deciding who is right for you. Make sure they are members of a professional body, such as the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, or British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy (see [Professional Organisations](#) at the back of this booklet).

## Other sources of help

If you can't get psychological therapy, or feel it's not right for you, other types of help or support are available. GPs can prescribe self-help books for mental health problems that you can borrow confidentially from the library [www.galaxy.bedfordshire.gov.uk/webingres/bedfordshire/vlib/0.books\\_readng/books\\_on\\_prescription\\_home.htm](http://www.galaxy.bedfordshire.gov.uk/webingres/bedfordshire/vlib/0.books_readng/books_on_prescription_home.htm)

Some voluntary organisations in Bedfordshire run support groups and self-help networks where you can meet people who have similar experiences.

Supported physical exercise programmes have also been effective in reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety and your GP may be able to refer you to a local gym or leisure centre.

The GP Exercise Referral Scheme supports people with conditions for which there is evidence to suggest that a structured exercise/physical activity and education programme is effective. One of the criteria is mild to moderate anxiety and depression. Programmes offer a range of guided physical activity and behaviour change interventions which are designed for, and agreed with, the individual. Clients meeting the criteria are referred by their GP to participating centres for a maximum of two sessions a week for up to 12 weeks i.e. a total of 24 sessions. A nominal charge is made to attend and there is normally an extended period of subsidised use of the leisure centre.

Many people find relaxation and breathing exercises using self-help tapes helpful. There is little reliable evidence for the long-term effectiveness of alternative therapies, such as hypnotherapy or acupuncture, but some people feel they benefit from them.

## Different approaches

There are a number of different sorts of psychological and interventions therapies, but the most common in Bedfordshire are counselling and cognitive behavioural therapy. As well as having different training, therapists develop their own individual styles of working. Some will use a mixture of approaches, others will specialise in one kind of therapy.

If you are unsure about a therapist's background, or the approach they use, don't be afraid to ask them. If they use any words you don't understand, ask them to explain in plain language. Don't feel stupid, as all therapists have to give a clear explanation of their therapy to every client at the first session.

Below we describe the main types of therapies provided by the NHS in Bedfordshire and the problems they can help. If research shows a particular therapy works for your problem, you will be offered that type first. But your GP should bear in mind what approach appeals to you most when referring you for therapy.

What matters most for all types of therapy seems to be your relationship with the therapist. If you feel you can trust and work well with him/her, it is more likely to help you.

If you don't want the therapy offered, or you try it and it doesn't help, or you don't feel comfortable with the therapist, your GP should try to find you an alternative.

For many people short-term or medium-term help is enough to improve their problem and their ability to cope, but longer term therapy may be needed for complex problems.

## Psychological therapies in GP practices/clinics for common mental health problems

The term 'common mental health problems' means problems caused by anxiety or depression, which most of us will suffer to some degree at some time in our lives.

About 16% of the population at any one time may have anxiety and/or depression that affects their lives.

In Bedfordshire we offer easy and confidential access to psychological therapies for such problems in your GP surgery or clinic, so you don't have to attend a specialist mental health centre.

Your GP can refer you confidentially to the primary care based psychological wellbeing and therapy services, and one of the team will contact you quickly and discreetly. There are three main types of therapy – guided self-help for anxiety and depression, cognitive behavioural therapy and counselling.

## Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT)

### Where do they work?

Five locality-based IAPT service teams operate in Bedfordshire in the Dunstable, Ivel Valley, Leighton Buzzard, West Mid Bedfordshire and Bedford areas.

IAPT interventions and treatments including self-help programme and CBT in each area are available Monday to Friday during office working hours with flexibility to arrange appointments between the hours of 8.00am and 7.00pm Monday to Friday to ensure access to the service.

## Self help programmes for anxiety and depression

If you suffer from depression, panic attacks or anxiety (excessive worry), your GP can offer you a confidential, guided self-help programmes for your problem though referral to IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies).

A psychological wellbeing practitioner attached to your GP surgery will contact you within a few days and offer you an appointment at the surgery for a confidential assessment.

He/she will show you a choice of programmes that you can use confidentially at home and offer you telephone support to help you with your treatment if you want it. Some people prefer to do without telephone support.

The support lasts from four to six weeks, depending on the programme, but the skills you learn can continue for life. Treatments include cognitive behavioural therapy programmes that have been tested and shown to be effective for these problems. Some of the treatments are delivered over the telephone, this is evidence based and means you carry it out at home and don't have to travel to weekly appointments.

The packages are:

### For depression

- **Living life to the full** – a computer programme used on a home PC via the internet, or as a DVD to watch on your home TV.
- **Depression and low mood** – a workbook with structured treatment exercises.
- **Teenage depression and low mood** – a workbook with structured treatment exercises.

- **Postnatal Depression** – a workbook with structured treatment exercises.

### For generalised anxiety (excessive worry)

- **Overcoming anxiety** – a workbook with structured treatment exercises

If you try one of these and find your problem has not improved as much as you would like, your primary care worker can easily refer you to another therapist for more intensive treatment.

## Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)

'Cognitive' is a scientific term for thought or thinking. 'Behavioural' means the things we do, so the name means 'thinking and doing therapy'.

CBT aims to help people change unhelpful patterns of thinking and behaviour that are causing or maintaining current problems.

Changing how you think about things, and what you do as a result, also changes how you feel. CBT focuses on the present and is a 'doing' and talking therapy. It involves planning practical exercises or experiments with your therapist and carrying these out together or as homework between sessions.

You may practise certain techniques and keep brief diaries of homework. It is a structured approach. You agree specific goals in overcoming your problems and work towards them step by step.

In Bedfordshire, CBT for common problems such as anxiety and depression is provided by qualified therapists. Your GP will refer you directly to a therapist accredited by the British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapy ([www.BABCP.com](http://www.BABCP.com)).

### What is it for?

CBT is an approach based on scientific research evidence. This means that the Bedfordshire CBT service will only offer treatment for problems that have been shown to improve with CBT in published research trials. The

National Institute for Clinical Excellence has reviewed the research evidence and recommended CBT for the treatment of:

- ◆ Stress and Anxiety
- ◆ Bereavement
- ◆ Controlling Anger
- ◆ Depression
- ◆ Depression and Low Mood
- ◆ Obsession and Compulsions
- ◆ Panic
- ◆ Shyness and Social Anxiety
- ◆ Sleep Problems
- ◆ Stress

## Counselling

Counselling helps you look at problems you are facing now. It may focus on a specific problem like bereavement or post-natal depression, or on a decision, a crisis, or a relationship in which there may be conflict.

The aim is to help you find a greater sense of wellbeing. You are encouraged to talk about the feelings you have about yourself and the situation and the counsellor helps you find ways to tackle them.

Counsellors focus on patients' choices in life as a basis for their work. Counselling in Bedfordshire is usually short term. It may also help you to explore past problems that are still affecting your day-to-day life.

In Bedfordshire, GPs have primary care counsellors in their surgeries and can refer you directly. Longer-term counselling may be more like psychotherapy and is available through some voluntary organisations.

## What is it for?

Counselling can help with ordinary problems of living and crises. It can help you stay well and prevent mental health problems. There is evidence that counselling can help people with the following problems:

- depression due to stressful life circumstances

- major life changes and crises including post-natal illness
- coping with illness and injury
- relationship issues
- family issues
- stress and trauma
- sexuality issues
- self image and identity issues
- unusual bereavement (e.g. death in traumatic circumstances, or death of a child or young person)
- emotional, physical and sexual abuse

The Department of Health (2001) suggests people who have difficulty adjusting to life, illness, disability or loss may benefit from counselling.

## Other therapies

Some therapy will be one-to-one – just you and the therapist. Group therapy tends to be for people with similar problems who may benefit from sharing experiences with others.

## What can I ask and expect from my therapist?

Therapists vary and different types can be better for some people or some problems than others.

In Bedfordshire, all NHS therapists are qualified and belong to a professional body (with a code of ethics and practice, complaints and disciplinary procedures).

A very small number will be in training or newly trained. The majority are fully qualified, accredited and experienced.

You should ask therapists about their training and experience, but especially private therapists, as training courses can last anything from a week to several years.

It is important to check which professional body they belong to.

Your first one or two meetings should involve you and the therapist getting to know each other and deciding if you can work together.

You may not be offered a choice of who you see in the NHS, but you can still ask questions.

The more information you have about what to expect, the less likely you are to be disappointed.

### **Possible questions for your therapist**

- What kind of therapy do you offer and what is it trying to achieve?
- How long is a session and how often are they held?
- How long might therapy last and how does it end?
- How long before I should expect to feel some benefit from therapy?
- Can I contact you between sessions if I need to?
- What training have you had and how many years have you been practising?
- What professional organisation do you belong to?
- Have you had experience of working with people with similar problems to mine?
- Is therapy confidential and when might confidentiality being broken?
- In what circumstances might you refer me to another professional?
- (For non-NHS therapists) How much do I pay per session and is there a cancellation fee?

You may have different questions. Always ask if something is unclear.

### **NHS Bedfordshire Mental Health**

From the 1 April 2010 the provider of these specialist mental health services is South Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (SEPT)  
Website: [www.southessex-trust.nhs.uk](http://www.southessex-trust.nhs.uk)

They specialise in problems that require more intensive or longer term treatment.

Your GP can refer you directly to these services, which may be delivered in community mental health resource centres.

## Organisations providing psychological therapies commissioned by NHS Bedfordshire

### Mind

Tel: 0845 766 0163

Bedfordshire and Luton Mind is the leading local mental health charity.

Website: [www.bedsandlutonmind.org.uk](http://www.bedsandlutonmind.org.uk)

### Horizon

Tel: 01462 818700

Horizon Health Choices is committed to providing NHS patients with the best care possible.

Website: [www.horizonhealth.co.uk](http://www.horizonhealth.co.uk)

### Bedfordshire Community Health Services

Tel: 01234 795714

NHS Bedfordshire.

Website: [www.bedfordshire.nhs.uk](http://www.bedfordshire.nhs.uk)

### SEPT

Tel: 0300 123 0808

South Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (SEPT).

Website: [www.southessex-trust.nhs.uk](http://www.southessex-trust.nhs.uk)

## Professional organisations

### British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)

Tel: 01788 578328

For lists of UK counsellors and psychotherapists

Website: [www.counselling.co.uk](http://www.counselling.co.uk)

### British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies (BABCP)

Tel: 01254 875277

For information on CBT and a list of trained CBT therapists

Website: [www.babcp.com](http://www.babcp.com)

### British Confederation of Psychotherapists (BCP)

Tel: 020 8830 5173

For a list of trained psychotherapists

Website: [www.bcp.org.uk](http://www.bcp.org.uk)

### British Psychological Society (BPS)

Tel: 0116 254 9568

For a directory of chartered psychologists and complaints about psychologists

Website: [www.bps.org.uk](http://www.bps.org.uk)

### General Medical Council (GMC)

Tel: 020 7580 7642

For a register of doctors, complaints and disciplinary procedures

Website: [www.gmc-uk.org](http://www.gmc-uk.org)

### Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC)

Tel: 020 7637 7181

For nurses' code of conduct, disciplinary procedures, complaints

Website: [www.nmc-uk.org](http://www.nmc-uk.org)

### UK Council of Psychotherapy (UKCP)

Tel: 020 7436 3002

For information about psychotherapy and UK psychotherapists

Website: [www.psychotherapy.org.uk](http://www.psychotherapy.org.uk)

## Other sources of help

### NHS Direct

Telephone: 0845 46 47

Website: [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)

### NHS Choices

Website: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### Samaritans

Telephone: 08457 909090

For confidential emotional support for people in crisis 24 hours a day

Website: [www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)

### Mental Health Foundation

Telephone: 020 7535 7439

Website: [www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)

### Health Services Ombudsman

Telephone: 0345 015 4033 Or 020 7217 4051

For last resort complaints.

Website: [www.ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.ombudsman.org.uk)